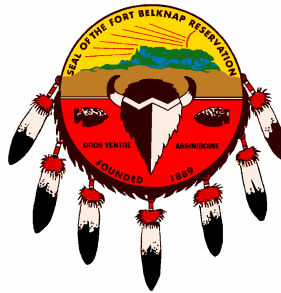


FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENT

BROWNFIELDS TRIBAL RESPONSE COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION PLAN

BROWNFIELDS TRIBAL RESPONSE PROGRAM



*Revised By:
Sherry C. Bishop,
Brownfields Coordinator
November 8, 2004
Revised September 8, 2006*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) is supportive of establishing a Brownfields Tribal Response Program (BTRP) to better address the assessments, cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields sites and other contaminated sites on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

The FBIC does not currently have an existing infrastructure in place to fulfill all required elements of a response program. However, The FBIC Environmental Department has partially begun to address some of these elements through a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot Project, a Targeted Brownfields Assessment and a Brownfields Job Training Program, which were funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Several sites were identified as potential brownfields sites and Phase I & II environmental site assessments were completed on three sites.

The BTRP will enable the FBIC to build infrastructure and capacity to the existing brownfields program for activities occurring on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The BTRP will address the following: (1) to conduct a thorough survey and inventory of all potential Brownfields sites and/or other contaminated areas within the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, (2) to develop a public record to ensure all documents and record of sites are made readily available to the public, (3) to develop and implement mechanisms, such as oversight and enforcement authorities that are adequate to ensure that a response action will protect human health and the environment and ensure that the necessary response activities are completed if the person conducting the response fails to complete the necessary response activities (this may include operation and maintenance or long-term monitoring activities, (4) to develop mechanisms for approval of a cleanup plan and verification and certification that cleanup is complete, and (5) to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation.

II. SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the BTRP Community Communication Plan described in this document is to facilitate communication relevant to the brownfields activities among the tribal government, cultural societies, environmental staff, and community residents. The primary goal of the plan is to maintain an informed, involved community and to encourage a community driven brownfields program rather than a project that lacks true community participation.

The facilitation of communication around the brownfields issues will be coordinated with the ongoing effort to educate the community about environmental issues that tribes face. The BTRP staff will develop specific methods of public communication to reach the community and specific target audiences. Through meetings, surveys and other methods the Council can determine what environmental conditions the community will accept, and what environmental conditions are unacceptable or will hinder redevelopment. The communication plan will focus on requirements of the Tribal Response Program (CERCLA 128(a)) Grant.

III. SITE DESCRIPTION

The project area is located in Blaine and Phillips Counties, Montana, within the exterior boundaries of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, home to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboiné Tribes. It is 40 miles east of the city of Havre and 3 miles east of the town of Harlem, Montana. The project area encompasses the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

IV. COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Fort Belknap Indian Community encompasses 697,617.18 gross acres with an average length running north to south 40 miles and the average width of 28 miles. In addition, 161,523.16 acres of tribal trust lands outside the reservation's boundaries were obtained through the Land Acquisition Program. The reservation is generally rural with tribal members residing in several residential areas, including the communities of Hays, Lodge Pole, and the Agency. The communities of Hays and Lodge Pole are situated near the northern flanks of the Little Rocky Mountains on the southern most part of the reservation, while the Agency is located on the northern most part of the reservation, near the Milk River. There are 7,582 tribally enrolled members, with approximately 4,360 residing on the reservation. The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is an isolated community with an extremely high unemployment rate. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, along with the Fort Belknap Planning Department, conducted an Indian Labor Force Survey and found an Unemployment Rate of 71% for the year 2003. Of those identified as employed, 39.8% are listed as below the poverty line. These figures show that Fort Belknap is truly a distressed area.

V. TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is home to two tribes, which operate under one central government. The Fort Belknap Community Council (FBCC) is recognized as the governing body of the FBIC and has the authority to execute all documents, contracting powers, and governmental authority to carry out the purposes, tasks and objectives of this program. The FBCC is a ten (10)-member council, consisting of two (2) Gros Ventre District Representatives, two (2) Gros Ventre At-Large Representatives, two (2) Assiniboine District Representatives, and two (2) Assiniboine At-Large Representatives, who are elected to serve two-year terms. A Gros Ventre and Assiniboine President/Vice-President executive team is elected At-Large to serve a four-year term. The Tribal Secretary/Treasurer is appointed by the President and confirmed by a majority vote of the presiding council. The current FBCC and its administration were seated in November 2003. The Tribal Government is unique in a sense that it is communal and democratic, overseeing all tribal programs on the reservation. Presently, the Fort Belknap Environmental Manager administers several environmental programs, including the Brownfields Demonstration Assessment Project, the Brownfields Job Training Program, and the Brownfields Tribal Response Program. The Brownfields Coordinator is responsible for carrying out the goals and objectives of the Brownfields Programs and reports directly to the Environmental Manager. The Environmental Manager in turn reports directly to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who oversees all Tribal Programs. He/she consults with the Tribal Council on any significant changes in policy. Please see Organizational Chart in Appendix A.

VI. COMMUNICATION PLAN GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The BTRP Communication Plan will address the four required elements and the Public Record component required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for the Tribal Response Program (CERCLA 128(a)) Grants. The Communication Plan describes the methods used to incorporate brownfields information into current public outreach activities in the community. The communication plan outlines an approach to public involvement and outreach that will enable the community to become actively involved in the brownfields process. The communication plan will provide a mechanism for the community and stakeholders to offer public comment on conducting site activities, redevelopment and cleanup decisions. The plan will encourage community involvement, and ensure the community has the opportunity to discuss and make their views known. The BTRP staff will utilize the unique traits of the community, specifically its small size, to facilitate

communication relevant to the brownfields activities. During the past three years of the brownfields program, stakeholders have been identified and as the program progresses, additional stakeholders will be identified and included into the plan.

A. Survey and Inventory of Potential Brownfields Sites

At a minimum, the Fort Belknap Tribal Response Program will develop and maintain a system that will provide a reasonable estimate of the number of potential brownfields sites within the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The sites will be surveyed, inventoried and inventory forms will be completed for each individual site. The inventory forms will include the site location, site characteristics, site use (past and present), site ownership status, potential contaminants, and historic information related to the site. The inventory will be filed at the Fort Belknap Environmental Department Office and made available to the public.

B. Public Record

The Public Record is a component of the Tribal Response Program requirements and will be developed during the first year of the Fort Belknap Brownfields Tribal Response Program. The public record will include a record of all sites at which response actions (assessment activities, cleanup, etc.) have been completed during the previous year and a record of sites in which response actions are planned for the upcoming year. The information must at a minimum include, the name(s) and location(s) of each site. Next, the public record will include a determination of whether or not a site, upon completion of a response action will be suitable for unrestricted use or restricted use. If institutional controls are relied upon as part of the site remedy, then they must be identified and included in the public record.

C. Public Participation

The Fort Belknap Tribal Response Program will provide meaningful opportunities for public participation and will work towards a community driven brownfields program, rather than one lacking community input and participation. Several mechanisms and resources for public participation will be developed.

All documents and related materials will be made available to the public. This will be achieved through a website design specifically for the Fort Belknap Tribal Response Program, The website will be a link from the

Official Fort Belknap Indian Community website. This will provide the public with easy access to all documents and related materials that involve brownfields activities occurring within the boundaries of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The website will provide a reporting form for a person(s) who may be affected by a release or threatened release of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant at a brownfields site to request a site assessment to be conducted. The reporting form will allow a person to describe in detail any potential sites that may fit a "brownfields" description. The reporting form will be sent via email directly to the Brownfields Coordinator, who then will respond to the request or the submitted information. Furthermore, any current site activities or cleanup plans will be made available to the public, providing ample time and opportunity to make available all comments.

D. Site Specific Activities

A site-specific activity such as a remedial action (cleanup) funded 128(a) Tribal Response Grant or a Brownfields Assessment Grant requires a site specific Community Involvement Plan. At a minimum, the Community Involvement Plan will include (1) notifying the local communities and inform them of how they can obtain information on a proposed cleanup activity; (2) provide mechanisms (mailing list, media, radio, or newspaper) for community input or comments and; (3) Provide an Administrative Record housed within the Fort Belknap Environmental Department. The Administrative Records shall contain all documents related to site investigation reports, site assessments, Phase I and Phase II Final reports, site cleanups, Final Cleanup and Verification of Cleanup Document, and any responses to public comments.

VII. COUNCIL MEMBERS/COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The first goal of the communication plan is to work closely with the Fort Belknap Community Council (FBCC) members. The Brownfields Coordinator will keep the FBCC informed on all aspects of the program. The Coordinator will meet with the council as needed, but at least quarterly to give an update of the brownfields activities as they occur. The meetings will be informal and will be designed to collect information, hear council opinion and to answer questions related to the project. Also, these meetings will identify any community members with an active interest in the sites that the BTRP staff might otherwise miss. Next, the project coordinator will coordinate community meetings to actively involve the community in environmental surveys and in all decision-making processes. Informal meetings in Hays, Lodge Pole and the Ft

Belknap Agency will be held on a quarterly basis, with the goal of (1) informing the community of public notices; (2) progress of the brownfields project; (3) answer questions related to the project; (4) and seek community involvement in the brownfields process. Meetings will be held as needed to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment on cleanup plans and site-specific activities.

VIII. CULTURAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The White Clay Society and Buffalo Chasers Society are culturally based societies promoting and advancing the cultural health of the tribal community. Both past and presently, the societies are actively assisting with environmental justice issues, cultural assessments and cultural site supervision. Both societies are extremely important to the tribe. Direction and guidance related to environmental issues on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation are often requested of the societies. Input from the societies will be respectively requested. The BTRP staff will hold informal meetings with the societies to request their advice and also to keep the societies updated on the progress of the project. The number of meetings will be at the discretion of the societies.

IX. INVOLVED TRIBAL ENTITIES

The Brownfields Coordinator will work closely with the Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) to ensure that the Fort Belknap Indian Procurement Policy, the Fort Belknap TERO Ordinance, Indian Preference and other applicable preference laws are followed. The Brownfields Coordinator will keep TERO updated of scheduled workshops and trainings such as HAZWOPER and other health/safety related courses as they become available.

In addition, the Brownfields Coordinator will establish a Brownfields Advisory Group, which will consist of Tribal Program staff, Federal Agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Indian Health Service (IHS), and other pertinent members that will work together as a group to: (1) rank and prioritize inventoried sites for needed environmental assessments; (2) provide input and guidance for any response actions at a identified brownfields site; (3) identify institutional controls that may be need to be included with land use options; (4) and to provide general direction to the Brownfields Coordinator concerning the brownfields activities, cleanup and reuse.

X. MAILING LIST

A mailing list was initiated during the previous brownfields programs and has been updated and incorporated into the BTRP. A mailing list sign-up sheet will be posted at the Environmental Department's booth during the Annual Mid-Winter Fair and during the annual Earth Day Celebration. The mailing list will be used to distribute educational information, meeting schedules, and other pertinent information related to project.

Interested persons will continue to be encouraged to sign up on the mailing list. Other stakeholders and local news media-contacts will also be added to the mailing list. The BTRP staff will work with the project contact to identify and select the stakeholders that will receive information about the project and can participate in the community outreach process. This list will be updated throughout the project.

XI. MEDIA

Fort Belknap College Radio Station (KGVA 88.1) is the voice for the people of the Fort Belknap Indian Community. General information relating to BTRP will be aired on KGVA as it becomes available. The BTRP staff will also contact different stakeholders and environmental experts to discuss hazardous & solid waste issues, the importance of environmental codes and ordinances, protocols needed for inspecting brownfields sites, and other environmental health related information that is relevant and informative to the community. Meetings will also be announced through KGVA, informing the communities of time, date and location of meetings as they arise. The local radio station is the most valuable asset to the BTRP. It remains the most reliable media and quickest means of informing and updating the public on relevant information.

XII. NEWSPAPER

The local newspapers such as the *Fort Belknap Community News*, *Blaine County Journal*, *Phillips County News*, and the environmental newsletter, the *Circle Speaker*, have assisted in dissemination of news articles for the

Environmental Department in the past. Past articles have been focused on wetlands, air pollution, water quality, mining issues, the brownfields assessment project, and the brownfields job training program. Articles related to the BTRP will also be published in the same manner. The

community will be kept up-dated on all progress, any clean-up activities and the redevelopment process. Also the BTRP staff will develop one or more newsletters that are easy to understand and provide stakeholders with project information. Newsletter articles will be written and published in the local newspapers to keep the public updated and create a high level of support for the project.

XIII. GRAPHICS

The BTRP staff will develop display boards to post at local events with informative brochures and updated information on the progress of the project.

IX. PUBLIC NOTICES

A public record will be developed to ensure the public is informed of the following information on all identified brownfields sites: site name, site locations (latitude, longitude, township, section, range, etc...), if cleanup has been completed, date action was completed, or date action is planned, name of owner at time of cleanup, type of site, summary of nature of contamination, site size in acres, a process designating the site for unrestricted use, or apply appropriate institutional controls after cleanup response actions have been completed, types of institutional controls, and other pertinent information related to the site.

Notices will be posted through newspapers, newsletters, and radio public announcements. In addition, files will be organized at the Environmental Department for community access.

X. SUMMARY

The communication plan will be revised as needed to include all Brownfields activities and to address all aspects of the program as necessary.